

A SCRIPTURAL INSTRUCTION MANUAL

Book One

HOW TO BUILD DOCTRINE

The Scripture-First Method

*"All scripture is given by inspiration of God,
and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for
correction,
for instruction in righteousness."*

2 Timothy 3:16

Established Upon the Authority of Holy Scripture

King James Version

How to Use This Book

This book is the first in a series of twelve volumes, each one corresponding to a chapter of A Scriptural Instruction Manual (the Master Volume). The Master Volume lays out the skeleton of doctrine — the what, in compressed and carefully worded form. Each book in this series exists to teach that doctrine in depth: the why, the how, the history of the question, the objections, the exegesis, and the practical implications for every believer, teacher, and minister.

Book One addresses the most foundational question a student of Scripture must answer before any doctrine can be rightly formed: How do we build doctrine? The method determines everything. A reader who gets the method wrong will build wrong — no matter how sincere, how diligent, or how well-read they may be. A reader who gets the method right will have, in their hands, the most reliable theological instrument available to human beings: the Word of God, read on its own terms.

This volume is written for three kinds of readers simultaneously:

- The new believer who has never studied theology formally and needs a clear, accessible introduction to how to read and trust the Bible.
- The teacher or pastor who needs both a thorough grounding in sound hermeneutics and the vocabulary to explain it to others.
- The advanced student or scholar who will find the Greek and Hebrew word studies, historical context, and exegetical depth they require. Each section moves from foundation to application. Key terms are defined. Difficult questions are addressed. Every doctrinal claim is tested against the standard this book itself establishes: the witness of Scripture, read in context, confirmed across multiple authors and covenants.

A Note on the KJV

All scripture quotations are from the King James Version. Where Greek or Hebrew terms are examined, the underlying text is cited alongside the English rendering. The KJV is used throughout the manual not as an idol but as a standard — consistent, reverent, and widely accessible to the body of Christ.

PART ONE

The Foundation of All Doctrine

Before a single doctrine can be rightly taught — whether about God, salvation, baptism, the Holy Ghost, church order, or the life to come — a

prior question must be settled: by what method do we determine what is true? This is not a procedural question. It is the question upon which everything else rests. The method of doctrine formation is the foundation beneath every foundation.

Throughout church history, the most devastating errors have not usually come from people who rejected the Bible. They have come from people who misread it — who took verses out of context, built systems on isolated texts, allowed tradition to override Scripture, or approached the Word with prior conclusions they needed it to confirm rather than truth they needed it to reveal. This book is a guide against every one of those errors.

Chapter One: The Scripture-First Method

The question "How do we build doctrine?" sounds technical. It is, in fact, the most pastoral question a church leader can ask. Every time a congregation is misled, every time a ministry fractures over theological error, every time a sincere believer is given false assurance or sent down a wrong path — at the root of that tragedy is almost always a failure of method. Not a failure of sincerity. Not a failure of effort.

A failure of method.

This chapter does not assume the reader has any prior theological training. It builds from the beginning. But it does not stay at the surface level. By the end of this chapter, both the new believer and the seasoned minister should be equipped with a rigorous, Scripture-grounded framework for building doctrine that will protect them from the most common errors of interpretation.

1.1 Scripture Alone as the Supreme Authority

The first and most foundational commitment of every student and teacher of the Word of God is this: Holy Scripture is the sole, supreme, and sufficient rule of faith and practice. This claim is not merely a Protestant slogan or a

denominational preference. It is the plain and unambiguous testimony of the Bible about itself.

We begin, as we must always begin, with what Scripture says.

2 Timothy 3:16--17

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

What Does 'Profitable' Mean?

The Greek word behind the English translation 'profitable' is *ophelimos* (ὠφέλιμος). It carries the sense of useful, beneficial, and sufficient for a purpose. Paul is not saying that Scripture is merely helpful as one resource among many. He is saying that Scripture is the complete and sufficient instrument for every category of theological work.

Notice what those four categories are:

Doctrine (didaskalia) — teaching that establishes what is true and what must be believed

Reproof (elegchos) — exposure of what is false, sinful, or in error

Correction (epanorthosis) — the restoration of what has been displaced — setting things right

Instruction in righteousness (paideia en dikaiosyne) — the ongoing training and discipline of the redeemed life

There is no category of spiritual need left unaddressed by the Word. If a minister finds himself reaching beyond Scripture — to experience, tradition, church councils, or personal revelation — as the ultimate authority for doctrine, he has already departed from what Paul establishes here.

Scripture is sufficient. That sufficiency is not theoretical; it covers everything.

1 Corinthians 4:6

"That ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written."

Paul's phrase 'that which is written' (Greek: ho gegraptai — the perfect passive participle of grapho) refers to the fixed, complete body of inspired text. The perfect tense in Greek carries the sense of a past action with abiding present results: it was written, and it stands written. The boundary of sound teaching is the boundary of what stands written. To move beyond it is not innovation. It is trespass.

The Severity of the Prohibitions

Deuteronomy 4:2

"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

Revelation 22:18--19

"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

These are not mild cautions. They are severe prohibitions, addressed to the entire people of God from the opening of the canon to its close. The God who inspired the Scriptures commands that nothing be added to them and nothing taken from them. This places an enormous responsibility on the

teacher. Every sermon, every book, every commentary that handles the Word must ask: Am I illuminating what is there, or am I adding what is not?

For the New Believer

You do not need a degree, an ordination, or years of experience to read and understand the Bible. What you need is a commitment to let it say what it says — including when it says things that challenge your assumptions. That commitment is the beginning of wisdom.

For the Teacher or Pastor

The authority with which you speak is borrowed authority. It is borrowed from the text. The moment you speak beyond the text with the same confidence you use when speaking from it, you have exceeded your commission. Paul's standard is sobering: not above that which is written.

A Brief Historical Note: The Tradition of Sola Scriptura

The Reformation principle of sola Scriptura — Scripture alone — was not invented by Luther or Calvin. It was recovered by them from the testimony of the text itself. Throughout the early centuries of the church, faithful ministers appealed constantly to the written Word as the final arbiter of doctrine. The Council of Nicea in 325 AD, the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD, and every major orthodox council appealed to Scripture as their ultimate authority, even when they were also engaging tradition and philosophy.

The problem arose when tradition was gradually elevated to equal or superior authority alongside Scripture. The Reformers did not innovate; they restored the standard the text itself demands. This manual follows that restored standard. Every doctrinal position in every volume of this series must be tested against Scripture — not tradition, not church councils, not

popular consensus, and not the private opinions of any minister, however learned or respected.

1.2 Canonical Harmony and the Witness Method

The first principle — Scripture alone — tells us what our authority is. This second principle tells us how to use it. Having established that Scripture is the supreme authority, the question immediately arises: how do we know when we have correctly understood what Scripture teaches on a given question? The answer is found in the judicial standard Scripture itself establishes.

Deuteronomy 19:15

"One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established."

Matthew 18:16

"But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

2 Corinthians 13:1

"This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."

The standard for establishing truth is not a single voice. It is a chorus of witnesses. This principle, originally given in a judicial context for civil matters in Israel, is applied by Christ himself to church discipline (Matthew 18), and applied by Paul to doctrinal certainty (2 Corinthians 13). Scripture itself teaches that no single isolated text — however clearly worded it may appear — is sufficient to establish a matter of settled doctrine by itself.

What the Witness Method Is — and What It Is Not

Some readers encounter this principle and immediately ask: does this mean every doctrine must have exactly two or three proof texts? No. That is a mechanical misreading of a principle about the nature of evidence.

The witness method is not an arithmetic formula. It is a commitment to canonical harmony — to building doctrine only from positions that are confirmed across the whole counsel of God, through multiple independent authors, genres, and covenants.

Consider what this means in practice:

- A doctrine confirmed in the Law, the Prophets, the Gospels, the book of Acts, and the Epistles stands on solid canonical ground.
- A doctrine found in a single passage, in one book, by one author, with no corroboration elsewhere in Scripture, must be held with appropriate humility rather than proclaimed as settled revelation.
- A doctrine that appears to be supported by one verse but is contradicted by the consistent testimony of multiple other texts is almost certainly being misread in that one verse. This principle, faithfully applied, would eliminate the vast majority of doctrinal error in the church. Consider how many theological systems have been built on a single text lifted from its context: "for by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8) read as eliminating any role for obedience; or "once saved, always saved" built almost entirely on John 10:28-29 while ignoring the sustained apostolic warnings to genuine believers throughout the Epistles. The witness method protects against these errors.

The Danger of the Single-Text System

One of the most persistent patterns of theological error throughout church history is what we might call single-text theology: the construction of entire doctrinal systems on one or two verses stripped of their context, with all contrary evidence explained away, minimized, or ignored. Every major cult in the history of Christianity has been built this way. And a sobering number

of otherwise orthodox theological traditions have allowed their signature doctrines to be shaped by this same error.

The manual's standard is not designed to make doctrine uncertain. It is designed to make doctrine solid. When a position can be demonstrated from multiple independent authors across multiple books and covenants, the student can hold it with complete confidence. The confidence comes not from tradition, ecclesiastical authority, or personal experience — it comes from the distributed, converging testimony of the whole Word of God.

Key Principle

The doctrine that is consistent with the distributed testimony of Scripture stands on solid ground. The doctrine that rests on a single isolated verse, stripped of context, must be held with humility, not proclaimed as settled revelation.

A Technical Note: The Greek Word for 'Established'

In Matthew 18:16 and 2 Corinthians 13:1, the word translated 'established' is the Greek verb *histemi* (ἵστημι), used here in its passive form, meaning 'to be made to stand' or 'to be confirmed as standing.' The image is of a truth being stood upright — given a firm, stable footing by the testimony of multiple witnesses. It is not a word of approximation or suggestion. It is a word of judicial confirmation.

The standard is clear: truth requires witnesses.

1.3 Context Rules Interpretation

The third principle of sound doctrine formation is the one violated most frequently in popular Bible teaching: every text must be read within its context. A verse divorced from its context becomes a different verse. It may carry different meaning, different application, and — critically — it may appear to teach the opposite of what its author intended.

There are three levels of context that every serious student must consider:

The Three Levels of Context

1. Immediate context: the paragraph, the chapter, the argument surrounding the verse. What question is the author answering? What has he just said? What does he say next?
2. Canonical context: the broader scope of the book, then the testament, then the whole Bible. How does this passage relate to what the rest of Scripture says on the same subject?
3. Covenantal context: is this passage written under the Old Covenant or the New Covenant? To Israel under the Mosaic law, or to the church under the covenant of Christ? The covenantal location of a text is essential to its correct application.

2 Timothy 2:15

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

The phrase 'rightly dividing' translates the Greek word *orthotomeo* (ὀρθοτομέω), a compound of *orthos* (straight) and *temno* (to cut). It is the image of a craftsman making a straight, clean cut — a surgeon's incision, not a butcher's hack. The Word of truth must be handled with precision and care. The one who handles it carelessly will not be ashamed before his peers; he will be ashamed before God.

The Analogy of Faith

When two passages appear to contradict each other, the interpreter is not permitted to simply choose the one that supports their preferred conclusion. The principle of the analogy of faith (*analogia fidei*) — a principle drawn from Romans 12:6, which speaks of prophesying 'according to the proportion of faith' — establishes that the clearer text governs the interpretation of the more obscure.

This is the correct approach when an apparent contradiction arises: the passage with the clearer, more direct statement of a truth is used to interpret the passage whose meaning is less clear in isolation. An apparent

contradiction is never grounds for abandoning a clear teaching of Scripture. It is always grounds for closer study.

Common Contextual Errors and How to Avoid Them

The following patterns of contextual error are the most frequently encountered in popular Bible teaching and personal study:

Error 1: The Proof-Text Method

A proof text is a verse used in isolation to 'prove' a doctrinal position, without reference to the context in which it appears. This method is dangerous because almost any doctrinal position can be supported by proof-texting if the texts are chosen carefully enough. The cure is always to read the surrounding passage: What is the author arguing? Who is he addressing? What question is he answering?

Example: Ephesians 2:8-9 is frequently cited as proof that baptism has no role in salvation, because the passage says 'not of works.' But Paul is not discussing baptism at all in this passage. He is refuting Jewish boasting in covenant membership and religious achievement. Reading his argument in full context, and then reading what he says about baptism elsewhere (Romans 6:3-4, Colossians 2:12), produces a much more nuanced and faithful picture.

Error 2: The Genre Confusion

Not all biblical writing is the same genre, and genre governs meaning.

Poetry (Psalms, Proverbs, much of the Prophets) uses figurative language, parallelism, hyperbole, and imagery that is not meant to be interpreted with the same flat literalism as legal code or historical narrative. A teacher who takes Psalm 22:6 ('I am a worm, and no man') as a biographical statement of low self-esteem has misread the genre. A teacher who reads the apocalyptic imagery of Revelation as literal newspaper prediction has misread the genre.

Genre identification is not a license to dismiss difficult passages. It is the honest work of discovering what the author intended to communicate in the form he chose to use.

Error 3: Covenantal Displacement

One of the most widespread forms of contextual error is the application of Old Covenant obligations and promises directly to New Covenant believers, without accounting for the change of covenant established at the cross and sealed at Pentecost. Malachi 3:10 (the storehouse tithe) is preached as a New Covenant financial obligation. Levitical holiness codes are applied to dietary and cultural practices. Old Covenant blessings and curses are mapped directly onto the modern church.

This error in the opposite direction is equally damaging: dismissing New Covenant commands on the grounds that they are 'too much like works.' The covenant changed at the cross. What changed, what continued, and what was fulfilled must be determined by reading both testaments together, with careful attention to what the New Covenant itself says about its relationship to what came before.

For Every Reader

Before you cite a verse as proof of anything, ask three questions: (1) What is the author's argument in the surrounding passage? (2) What does the rest of Scripture say on this subject? (3) Is this text written under the Old or New Covenant, and to whom?

1.4 Acts and the Epistles: Complement, Not Competition

This principle is of particular importance for the study of salvation — which is treated in depth in Books Four, Five, and Six of this series. But it belongs here, in the foundation chapter, because it is a hermeneutical principle that governs the reading of the entire New Testament.

The New Testament is composed of two distinct kinds of literature serving two distinct but complementary purposes:

The Function of Acts

The book of Acts is the inspired record of the apostolic proclamation of the gospel and its reception by sinners across the Mediterranean world.

Its primary function is narrative and historical: it shows what actually happened when the gospel was preached, what response it called for, and what obedience looked like. Acts gives us the conversion pattern — what sinners were commanded to do and did when they encountered the good news of Jesus Christ.

This is not Acts' only function, but it is its most critical function for the question of salvation. When the crowd at Pentecost asked 'What shall we do?' (Acts 2:37), Peter's answer in verse 38 is the apostolic standard for conversion. That standard is not hypothetical, not theological abstraction — it is the answer given by a Spirit-filled apostle to a crowd of convicted sinners who wanted to know what God required.

The Function of the Epistles

The Epistles were written to communities of believers who had already obeyed the gospel. They were not re-laying the foundation of conversion; they were building upon it. This distinction matters enormously. A letter that tells the Colossians they were 'buried with him in baptism' (Colossians 2:12) is not teaching baptism as an isolated act — it is assuming the Colossians already understood and had obeyed the full gospel, and it is drawing a theological implication from one element of that obedience.

The Epistles provide:

- Theological depth — explaining the meaning and mechanism of what was commanded in Acts
- Covenant explanation — showing how the New Covenant fulfills and supersedes the Old

- Pastoral instruction — addressing the practical challenges of the redeemed life in community
- Doctrinal correction — addressing specific errors that had arisen in specific churches

Why This Distinction Matters

The most serious doctrinal fragmentation in Protestant Christianity has arisen from treating epistolary references to individual elements of the gospel as if they were complete summaries of the gospel. A reader who encounters 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved' (Acts 16:31) and concludes that belief alone is the complete and final description of new birth has made this error. Paul was answering the jailer's panicked question with the foundational truth the jailer needed first — not providing Paul's complete theology of conversion in a single sentence.

The jailer then had the gospel explained to him (verse 32), was baptized the same hour (verse 33), and rejoiced — believing in God with all his house (verse 34). The brief statement of verse 31 does not contradict what follows; it introduces it. Reading it as the totality of the gospel requires ignoring the very next three verses.

Acts and the Epistles are complementary strata of a single, unified revelation. They must be read together, each informing and completing the other. This manual consistently does so. Every book in this series will hold these two bodies of literature in their proper relationship.

Critical Hermeneutical Rule

The Epistles were written to people who had already obeyed the gospel. When an epistle references one element of the new birth, it is drawing on what its readers already knew and had done — not providing a complete summary of what conversion requires. Always read epistolary references to salvation against the backdrop of the full apostolic proclamation in Acts.

1.5 The Tradition of Men versus the Commandments of God

The fifth principle of sound doctrine formation is the most uncomfortable for many readers, because it requires every community of faith to examine its inherited practices against the standard of Scripture — and to set aside whatever does not meet that standard, however old, however beloved, and however sincerely held it may be.

Matthew 15:3, 6--9

"Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?... Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

These are not gentle words. Christ calls the tradition-above-Scripture posture hypocrisy and vain worship. The standard he applies is not novelty — he is not asking Israel to abandon everything old and embrace everything new. He is asking them to subject every tradition to the authority of the written commandment of God. Where tradition faithfully reflects the written Word, it has value. Where it replaces or contradicts the written Word, it must be set aside.

What Is Tradition?

Tradition, in the theological sense, is the body of accumulated practice, interpretation, and custom that a community inherits from its predecessors. Tradition is not inherently bad. Much of it is valuable: the decision to use the KJV as a standard translation, the practice of corporate prayer, the observance of the Lord's Supper, the structure of worship services — these are traditional practices that either reflect or are consistent with scriptural command.

Tradition becomes dangerous when it begins to carry the same authority as Scripture, or when it is defended on the grounds of its own age or veneration rather than its scriptural fidelity. The age of a tradition is irrelevant to its authority. A practice two thousand years old that contradicts the plain teaching of Scripture is still wrong. A practice fifty years old that faithfully reflects apostolic command is still right.

Historical Examples of Tradition Overriding Scripture

The following examples are not given to disparage any community of believers, but to illustrate concretely what it looks like when tradition is elevated above scriptural command:

- **Infant baptism:** The practice of baptizing infants became widespread in the church by the third and fourth centuries. But no apostolic command for it exists in Scripture. Every baptism recorded in the New Testament was of a person old enough to believe, repent, and respond. The tradition developed; the scriptural warrant did not.
- **The sinner's prayer:** A twentieth-century Protestant tradition that has become so embedded in evangelical culture that most practitioners are unaware it is absent from Scripture. No apostolic minister in the book of Acts ever led a convert in a sinner's prayer. The tradition replaced the apostolic pattern — Acts 2:38 — with a man-made substitute.
- **Tithing as income percentage:** The biblical tithe is defined as agricultural produce and livestock (Leviticus 27:30-32). It was never applied to wages or income in Scripture. The modern practice of defining the tithe as ten percent of income has no scriptural warrant. It is a tradition that has been defended by tradition rather than the text. None of this means these communities are filled with insincere or wicked people. It means that tradition, left unchecked by regular return to the text, will always drift from the apostolic standard. The antidote is not cynicism. It is consistent, faithful, reverent study of the Word of God.

The Danger of Inherited Assumptions

Perhaps the most subtle form of tradition is the inherited assumption: the belief that has been absorbed through the culture of a community so thoroughly that it is never consciously examined at all. The believer who has always heard that faith alone saves, with no role for baptism, does not think of that as a tradition — he thinks of it as obvious.

The person who has never heard tongues associated with receiving the Holy Ghost does not think of that as a tradition — he thinks of it as common sense. Inherited assumptions are the hardest traditions to identify, because they feel like truth rather than tradition.

The cure is the same in every case: return to the text. Bring every assumption, however deeply embedded, to the bar of Scripture. Read what the text says without the assumption already in place. This is the work this manual demands of every reader, and it is the work that every volume in this series is designed to facilitate.

1 Timothy 4:1

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."

The Spirit speaks expressly — clearly, directly, without ambiguity.

The doctrines of devils are not usually presented as openly demonic.

They are usually presented as refinements of truth, as more sophisticated or more gracious readings of Scripture, as freedom from legalism or as mature understanding. The guard against them is not suspicion of everything. It is unshakeable commitment to the written Word, read carefully, in context, confirmed across multiple witnesses.

Chapter Two: Applying the Method

The five principles of Chapter One are not theoretical tools to be admired and set aside. They are practical instruments to be used every time a student opens the Bible. This chapter walks through what that looks like in practice — both for the personal student and for the teacher or minister responsible for others.

2.1 How to Approach a Doctrinal Question

When a doctrinal question arises — whether in personal study, in preparation for a sermon, or in a theological debate — the Scripture-first method provides a clear sequence of steps:

4. State the question precisely. A vague question produces a vague answer. 'What does the Bible say about salvation?' is too broad. 'What does Scripture say about the role of water baptism in the new birth?' is answerable.
5. Gather every passage that speaks directly to the question. Use a concordance. Do not begin with a conclusion and look for texts that support it. Begin with the texts and let them form the conclusion.
6. Read each passage in its immediate context. Before drawing any doctrinal inference, understand what the author is arguing, who he is addressing, and what question he is answering.
7. Identify the covenantal location. Is this an Old Covenant or New Covenant text? What are the implications of that location for this specific question?
8. Look for convergence. Where do multiple independent authors, across multiple books and testaments, point in the same direction? That convergence is the bedrock of settled doctrine.
9. Address the apparent exceptions. If there are texts that appear to point a different direction, study them more carefully. Apparent contradictions almost always dissolve under closer examination.

- 10.State the conclusion in terms of the whole witness. Doctrine stated this way — 'across six independent witnesses spanning four authors' — carries a different weight than doctrine stated as 'one verse says.'

2.2 Common Objections to the Scripture-First Method

Objection 1: 'The Holy Spirit guides me into all truth. I don't need a method.'

This objection sounds spiritual. It is, in practice, a claim to personal infallibility. The Holy Spirit does guide believers into truth — and the primary instrument through which he does so is the Word of God. John 16:13 promises that the Spirit will guide into all truth; the entire letter of John is consumed with warning against the spirits of error that produce false doctrine. The way to distinguish the Spirit's leading from human imagination and demonic deception is the written Word. Method is not the enemy of the Spirit. Careless reading is.

Objection 2: 'My church has always taught this. Are you saying my church is wrong?'

The answer is: possibly, in some areas. Every church has inherited some errors alongside its truths. This is not a condemnation of any particular community; it is the honest testimony of church history. The question is not whether your church has always taught something. The question is whether the Bible teaches it. Those are not always the same question, and the honest student must be willing to discover the difference.

Objection 3: 'You're just interpreting the Bible your own way.'

Every reader interprets. The question is not whether to interpret but how. Interpretation guided by the five principles of this chapter — Scripture alone, multiple witnesses, context, the Acts/Epistles distinction, and freedom from tradition — is fundamentally different from interpretation guided by preference, tradition, or theological convenience. The method described here is not a private reading. It is the method Scripture itself prescribes.

2.3 The Relationship Between This Book and the Books That Follow

Every doctrinal position taught in the remaining eleven books of this series has been formed by the method described in this volume. Where Acts 2:38 is cited as the apostolic standard for salvation, the reader now understands why: it is where multiple witnesses converge on a clear, direct answer to a direct question asked of an apostle. Where the Oneness of God is established from Deuteronomy through Colossians, the reader now understands why that cross-canonical sweep is necessary and what it proves.

Return to this book whenever you encounter a doctrinal question that feels difficult. The method does not change. The texts do. But the approach — let Scripture speak, let multiple witnesses confirm, let context govern, let tradition be tested — remains constant from the first page of the Bible to the last.

The Foundational Commitment

Not what tradition teaches. Not what feels right. Not what the age approves. But what does Scripture say? That question, answered rigorously and in the light of the whole counsel of God, is both the method and the mission of this work.

Chapter Three: Key Terms and Technical Reference

This chapter is provided for the student who wishes to examine the original languages behind the English text. It is not required for understanding the doctrinal content of the preceding chapters, but it is provided because sound exegesis often depends on knowing precisely what a word meant in the language in which it was written.

3.1 Old Testament Hebrew Terms

Torah (תורה) — Law, Instruction, Teaching

The Hebrew word torah is most often translated 'law' in the KJV, but its root meaning (from the verb yarah, to direct or instruct) is closer to teaching or instruction. The Torah is not merely a legal code; it is God's instruction to his people about how to live in covenant with him.

This broader meaning shapes how the Old Testament uses the Word of God — not as a burden but as a gift of direction to the people he has redeemed.

Dabar (דבר) — Word, Matter, Thing

The Hebrew dabar is used for both the spoken word and the accomplished thing. When God speaks a word (dabar), it accomplishes its purpose.

Isaiah 55:11: 'So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please.' The authority of Scripture is grounded, in part, in the nature of God's word as something that accomplishes rather than merely describes.

3.2 New Testament Greek Terms

Theopneustos (θεόπνευστος) — God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16)

This is the Greek compound behind the phrase 'given by inspiration of God.' It appears only once in the New Testament. Theos (God) + pneo (to breathe). Scripture was breathed out by God. This is not the image of God inspiring human authors the way a Muse inspires a poet — it is the image of the breath of God filling the words themselves. The authority of Scripture is not merely divine guidance of human authors; it is divine origin of the written text.

Graphe (γραφή) — Writing, Scripture

In the New Testament, graphe consistently refers to the inspired body of written text — the Scriptures as a whole or a specific passage within them.

When Paul says 'all graphe is theopneustos,' he is making a claim about the entire body of authoritative written text: it is all God-breathed, it is all profitable, and it is all sufficient for the four categories of theological work he identifies.

Orthotomeo (ὀρθοτομέω) — Rightly Dividing (2 Timothy 2:15)

From orthos (straight) and temno (to cut). The image is of making a straight, precise cut through material — the craftsman's clean incision versus the rough hack of an untrained hand. Used only here in the New Testament. The standard Paul sets for Timothy is not casual familiarity with the text but skilled, precise handling.

Analogia Pisteos (ἀναλογία πίστεως) — Proportion of Faith (Romans 12:6)

Translated 'proportion of faith' in Romans 12:6. Drawn into the theological tradition as the 'analogy of faith' — the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture, that the clearer text governs the obscure, and that no interpretation of a passage is valid if it contradicts the plain teaching of the whole. This principle is not imposed on the text from outside; it is derived from the text's own instruction about how to handle it.

Chapter Four: Study Guide and Review Questions

The following questions are provided for individual study, small group discussion, or classroom instruction. They are organized by section and range from foundational comprehension questions to deeper application and reflection questions.

Section 1.1 — Scripture Alone

11. In your own words, what does it mean for Scripture to be the 'sole rule of faith and practice'? What would it look like if a church violated this principle?

12. Paul says Scripture is profitable for four things in 2 Timothy 3:16. What are they? Which of these four do you think is most neglected in modern Christianity, and why?
13. What is the difference between illuminating what is already in Scripture and adding to it? Give an example of each.
14. (Advanced) The Greek word *theopneustos* appears only once in the New Testament. What does its compound meaning tell us about the nature of biblical inspiration? How does this differ from other views of inspiration you may have encountered?

Section 1.2 — The Witness Method

15. Why is it dangerous to build a doctrine on a single verse in isolation?
16. How does the judicial standard of Deuteronomy 19:15 apply to the formation of doctrine? What does 'two or three witnesses' mean in that context?
17. Can you think of a doctrine you have heard taught that may have been built on insufficient scriptural witness? How would you evaluate it using the principles in this section?
18. (Advanced) What is the difference between the witness method and proof-texting? Can the same passage be used legitimately in one context and illegitimately in another?

Section 1.3 — Context Rules Interpretation

19. What are the three levels of context every reader must consider? Give a brief definition of each.
20. Choose any familiar verse and examine it in its immediate context. Does the context change how you understand it?
21. What is covenantal context and why does it matter? Give an example of a passage where ignoring covenantal context leads to misapplication.

Section 1.4 — Acts and the Epistles

22. What is the primary function of the book of Acts in the New Testament?
How does this differ from the primary function of the Epistles?
23. Why is it a hermeneutical error to read an epistle's partial reference to salvation as a complete summary of what conversion requires?
24. Read Acts 16:30-34 carefully. How does reading the whole passage change the interpretation of verse 31 alone?

Section 1.5 — Tradition

25. What is the difference between a tradition that reflects scriptural command and a tradition that replaces it?
26. Christ uses strong language about tradition in Matthew 15. What does he call it? What does this tell you about the seriousness of the issue?
27. Identify one tradition in your own church or background that you have never examined against Scripture. Commit to examining it. What texts would you study?
28. (Advanced) What is an 'inherited assumption'? Why is it harder to identify than a conscious tradition? What disciplines help a student surface and examine them?

A Closing Charge to Every Reader

You have now been given the most powerful interpretive tool available to any student of Scripture: not a method invented by scholars or theologians, but the method Scripture itself prescribes. Use it.

Read widely. Read carefully. Read in context. Read with the whole canon open before you, not a single page. Test every tradition — including the ones you hold most dearly — against the written Word of God. Build doctrine only where multiple witnesses converge. Hold humility where they do not.

The books that follow in this series will apply this method to the most important doctrines in the Christian faith: the nature of God, the reality of

sin, the terms of salvation, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the ordering of the church, the Christian household, and the judgment to come. Every position taken will rest not on tradition, not on one man's opinion, and not on the authority of this series itself — but on the distributed, converging, Spirit-breathed testimony of the whole counsel of God.

Read it. Test it. Let the Word stand.

Isaiah 40:8

*"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our
God shall stand for ever."*

Continue to Book Two:

The Oneness of God and the Identity of Jesus Christ